

Recreation

Goal: Provide a range of recreation opportunities consistent with public demand, emphasizing locally popular recreation places and those important to the tourism industry.

Objective: Manage recreation settings in accordance with recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) standards and guidelines for each land use designation (LUD), maintain existing trails and recreation sites to standard, and remove facilities that are no longer needed or are not affordable.

Background: The Tongass National Forest maintains two large visitor centers, about 200 cabins and shelters, and over 400 miles of trails for use by local residents and visitors. Along with the infrastructure, recreation use of the forest is facilitated through outfitters and guides. These services range from accommodating transport to cabins and shelters, to multi-day big game hunting experiences in the most remote locations on the forest.

Recreation Question: Are areas of the Forest being managed in accordance the prescribed Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class in Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines? Is the classification consistent with public demand?

Evaluation Criteria

Standards and guidelines for the management of visit use are maintained according to the ROS class which is appropriate for the land use designation.

Sampling/Reporting Period

Sampling period: annual; reporting period: five year

Monitoring Results

Outfitters and Guides

Almost 550,000 used guide services on the Tongass National Forest in 2012. Guides provided nature touring, hiking, flightseeing, dog-sledding, wilderness adventures, and big game guiding. In 2012, two environmental documents were completed that addressed commercial recreation uses for the Craig, Ketchikan-Misty, and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts. Both documents considered forest plan standards and guidelines, the land use designations, existing uses, and need for commercial services in the decision. The decisions affect more than 100 outfitters/guides that use these three districts for some or all of their annual operations. Since the decision provides a comprehensive analysis of the potential environmental impacts of this use, more than 50 permits issued by these three districts may be eligible for permits up to ten years. Long-term permits should provide for long-term stability of the businesses and visitor services to the public.

Although higher levels of guided uses are authorized through these analyses, one outcome will be a reduction of flightseeing tours by airplane authorized within the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness. The reduction of the airplane tours will improve the opportunities for solitude within portions of the congressionally designated wilderness which is consistent to the forest plan standards and guidelines and legislative direction for the protection of the wilderness character.

Developed Recreation Facilities and Trails

The Tongass maintains more than 350 developed recreation sites across the forest. These include two major visitor centers, four major wildlife/fish viewing sites, almost 200 shelters and cabins, a dozen campgrounds, and more than 40 day use or interpretive sites. Funding for the operations and maintenance of these facilities is accomplished through congressional appropriations and from fees collected at fee sites (major visitor centers, campgrounds, cabins, special recreation areas). The Tongass also manages more than 400 miles of hiking trails; of which almost 92 miles of trail are within congressionally designated wilderness. Another 400 miles of motorized trails are identified on district motor vehicle use maps that are updated annually and available at the local district offices. Again, operations and maintenance of the trails is accomplished through appropriated dollars and recreation fees, primarily collected from outfitters and guides who use the trails.



Recreation Pictures 1 and 2. In 2012, the public use cabin near the mouth of Anan Creek was replaced.
